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AUTHOR Smigielski, Alan; Casey, Douglas, Ed.

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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Art to Zoo" focuses on Japanese art and is adapted from materials developed by the education department of the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. After learning how to look at paintings, students make paper screens that resemble Japanese screens. Background essays about Japan place the art lessons within a larger social studies unit on Japan. Sections of the lesson plan include: (1) "Geography of Japan"; (2) "Looking for Clues: Paintings as Information Sources"; and (3) "Japanese Screens." Worksheets, take-home pages, and a resources list conclude the unit. Lessons are designed for grades 4-9 and address art, geography, and social studies. (EH)

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ED 422 211

Japan: Images of a People.

by Alan Smigielski

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BACKGROUND ESSAY 1

Japanese art—beautiful but mysterious? Demystify some examples of Japanese painting and help your students better understand and appreciate the culture that produced them with this issue of *Art to Zoo*. The lessons have been adapted from materials developed by the education department of the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the two national museums of Asian art. (*See page 15 for information on how to obtain their materials.*) After learning how to look at paintings, your students can make paper screens that resemble Japanese screens. But first, the following information about the country can help you place the art lessons within a larger social studies unit on Japan.

Geography

Japan is a crescent-shaped archipelago of four large and more than a thousand small islands. The large islands are Hokkaido, the northernmost; Honshu, the largest; Shikoku; and Kyushu. The combined area of the islands is about 145,000 square miles, which is larger than the state of California or the country of Italy. If it were superimposed over the East Coast of the United States, the group of islands would cover a space from Maine to Florida.

Japan is bordered on the north by the Sea of Okhotsk, on the east by the Pacific Ocean, and on the west by the Tsushima Strait, the Sea of Japan, and the East China Sea. No part of Japan is more than one hundred miles from the sea. Most of the land is mountainous, leaving only the coastal areas for large cities, industrial development, and farming.

Because of Japan's location in an unstable area of the Earth's crust, earthquakes and tremors occur there frequently. Undersea quakes can cause destructive tidal waves called *tsunami*. Some volcanic mountains are still active, and there are many hot springs, which the Japanese people use for recreational and medicinal purposes.

Climate

Just as the climate from Maine to Florida varies, so does the climate vary from the northernmost to the southernmost islands of Japan. Most of Japan has four seasons: winter (December to February), with heavy snow only on Hokkaido and Honshu; spring (March to May); summer (June to September) with hot and humid conditions; and fall (October to November). Much rain falls during the spring, summer, and fall. The precipitation starts first in the south and moves north during June and July, and destructive tropical storms called typhoons occur in September and October.

Vegetation

Because of the hot, humid summers there, more than 17,000 varieties of plants grow in Japan. Many trees thrive, including broad-leafed evergreens such as camellia, deciduous beech and oak, and conifers. Bamboo grows on Honshu and on the islands to the south. Many flowering plants flourish: azaleas and tree peonies bloom in April and May, respectively; the lotus in August; the chrysanthemum (Japan's national flower) in November; and the plum in February.

Rice Growing and Processing

Rice cultivation was introduced to Japan from other Asian countries by the fifth century B.C. Today, rice grows on almost half of the cultivated land in Japan. The climate in most areas of Japan allows for one crop of rice per year.

Long ago the Japanese believed the rice plant was a gift from the gods. For hundreds of years the difficult work of growing rice was done by hand, but now much is done by machine. However, the number of hours of labor per acre is still very high, about 330 hours per acre in 1975. This is about forty times the number

of hours of labor needed per acre for the production of corn in the United States.

Farmers start rice seeds in small plots of dry land, but the plants need to grow in shallow water, so they build low walls to form a *paddy* around a field. Pipes bring water from a nearby river to flood the field artificially. After three or four weeks, farmers transplant the young plants to the paddy. The fruit, a grain, is at the top of the stalk. When the rice is ripe, it resembles the oat plant and is golden yellow.

Farmers drain the paddy to harvest the rice. They cut the stalks, tie them in bundles, and hang them up to dry. When the bundles are dry, they thresh (beat) the rice and winnow it (toss it in the air) to separate the grain (the part that is eaten) from the outer brown husk. Finally the harvesters store the grain in bags. Rice is Japan's staple food and the plant's straw becomes part of many useful products such as hats, sandals, floor mats *(tatami)*, wine *(sake)*, and food for livestock. Huge ropes made of rice straw decorate entrances to shrines of the Shinto religion.

Architecture and Furniture

Japanese architecture emphasizes the use of natural materials and the combination of interior and exterior space through the use of sliding screens as doors and windows. Gardens are a part of the design of most buildings. The design of stilt-raised buildings originated from the style of architecture used in ancient granaries. Steep roofs with wide eaves were designed to shed heavy rains. The multi-storied towers, called pagodas, developed from the finial decorations found on the tops of Indian stupas, mound-shaped structures built to house religious relics, usually related to Buddha.

Although there are now high-rise apartments in Japan, traditional Japanese houses have only one or two stories and no basement. They use space to the fullest; often the same room combines living room, dining room, and bedroom. Instead of solid walls, sliding paper screens, called *fusuma*, and folding screens, called *byobu*, separate the area into rooms as necessary. Floor coverings include rice-straw mats called *tatami*. *Tatami* are a standard size: six feet long, three feet wide, and two inches thick. As a result, rooms are measured by the number of mats they hold, not in feet and inches. Standard rooms measure eight, six, or four-and-a-half mats. A bed, called a *futon*, consists of two mattresses that can be folded up and stored during the day. Families use a low table and cushions for dining and can push the furniture aside at other times.

Most homes contain a *tokonoma*, a niche for displaying art work, a flower arrangement, or both. Many people change the display seasonally or more often.

Clothing

Today most Japanese wear Western-style clothing but may choose the traditional kimono for special occasions. The kimono is a floor-length robe held together by a sash at the waist. Men's sashes are narrow, women's sashes, called *obi*, are wide. For formal occasions, men wear kimono in dark shades and women wear very colorful and beautifully embroidered kimono. Men sometimes wear wide-legged trousers called *hakama* under a short kimono. The most formal kimono are black garments decorated with white, miniature family crests (one on the back, one on each of the sleeves, and one on each side of the chest). The crest designs are usually circular or square and are derived from flowers, plants, birds, animals, and many other subjects.

A summer kimono made of light cotton is called *yukata*. Winter kimono are woolen. Special socks *(tabi)*, which are divided between the big toe and the rest of the toes, cover the feet. Over the socks go thong-type sandals, which can be worn on either foot.

Adapted from an essay by Nancy Hague Lyons and Sarah Ridley in Japan: Images and Words.

LESSON PLAN
Step 1

GEOGRAPHY OF JAPAN

Objectives

- Identify major geographical features of Japan.
- Interpret Japan's geographical location with reference to the United States.

Materials

- Copies of Activity Page 1.
- Maps of the world, Japan, and the United States (*you might also use the atlas section of your social studies book*).
- Pens, pencils, colored markers, crayons.

Subjects

- Geography, social studies

Procedure

1. Tell your students that during the next few class meetings they'll be studying some of the traditional art of Japan. Ask them to describe Japan's location in the world relative to the United States. Answers may vary, but students will probably conclude that the Japanese chain of islands is a great distance from the United States and close to the larger land mass of Asia.

2. Give each student a copy of Activity Page 1, "Mapping It Out," and other maps you have collected. Using Background Essay 1 as a guide, tell your students that Japan consists of a chain of mountainous islands that cover more than one thousand miles (1,600 km) from north to south—about the distance from Maine to Florida in the United States. Emphasize that only relatively small coastal areas of Japan are suitable for settlement and farming and that there is a great variation in climate from north to south.

3. Direct your students to Activity Page 1. Ask them to estimate the distance between the west coast of the United States and Japan using the provided inset map of the world or maps in their social studies books or atlases. (*Be sure to stress the importance of a map's scale in determining distance.*) Students should conclude that Japan is about 6,200 miles (10,000 km) from the West Coast of the United States. Have them measure its distance from the coast of Asia. To place the measurements in perspective, have students determine distances between their community and diverse parts of the United States as well as between different points on the island chain.

4. Ask your students to complete the map of Japan included in Activity Page 1 by placing the names of the selected islands, bodies of water, and cities in the correct locations. (*Younger students might enjoy coloring the landforms and bodies of water.*) When your students have finished the activity, ask them to think about whether an island location might affect the culture of a people (*you might also refer to other island nations such as Great Britain, Australia, and Cuba*). How do people overcome geographic barriers? (*Consider related issues such as trade and language.*) Mention that traditional Japanese culture incorporated both indigenous elements and cultural influences from China and other areas of the Asian mainland. Also note that the sea is an important resource to island peoples, both as a source of food and as a natural means of transportation.

5. Conclude the lesson by telling students that in the next step they will be asked to observe how geographical features appear in the traditional art of Japan.

ACTIVITY PAGE 1
Mapping It Out

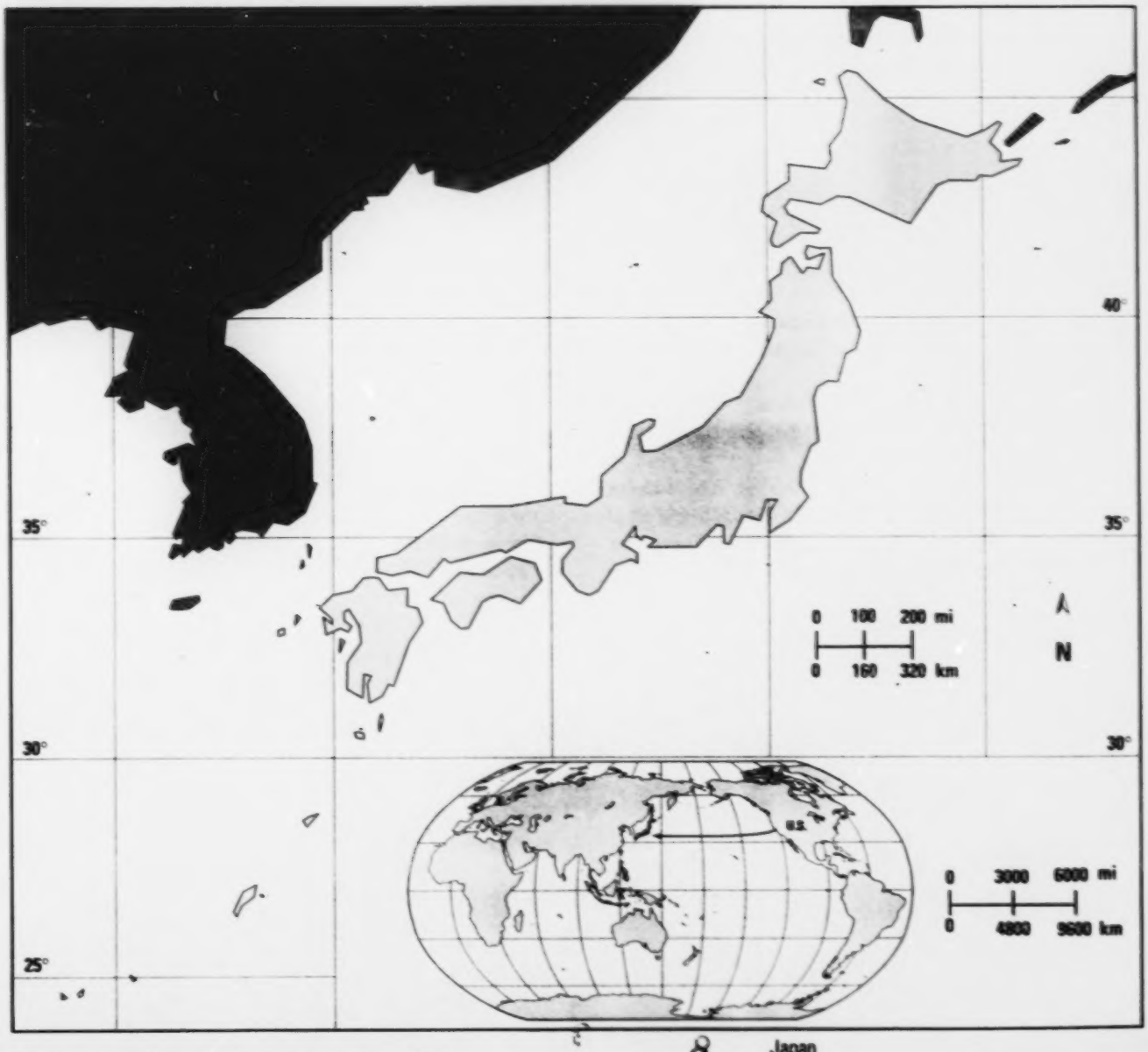
Directions: Locate the following features on the map.

Major islands
Honshu
Kyushu
Shikoku
Hokkaido
Okinawa
Ryukyu Islands

Major bodies of water
Pacific Ocean
Sea of Japan
Sea of Okhotsk
East China Sea

Nearby countries
Russia
China
North Korea
South Korea

Selected cities
Tokyo
Yokohoma
Kyoto
Osaka
Nagoya
Sapporo



8 Japan

LESSON PLAN
Step 2

LOOKING FOR CLUES: PAINTINGS AS INFORMATION SOURCES

Objectives

- Interpret Japanese and American paintings.
- Evaluate paintings as sources of cultural and historical information.

Materials

- Copies of Activity Pages 2A, B, and C.
- Pens or pencils.

Subjects

- Art, social studies

Procedure

1. Tell your students that they'll be acting like detectives in this activity. Ask them what detectives look for to solve a mystery. Answers may vary, but students will probably conclude that detectives seek clues that suggest a particular sequence of events in the past. Emphasize that they'll now be looking for clues in paintings that can provide insights into the daily lives of people in earlier times who lived in Japan and the United States.

2. Give each student a copy of Activity page 2A and two copies of 2C. Ask them to examine carefully the painting on Activity Page 2A and answer the accompanying observation questions from Activity Page 2C. (*Do not tell your students the title or subject of the painting at this time.*) When your students have finished answering the questions, begin a class discussion based on their responses. Students will probably conclude that the painting depicts a town in the United States during the early twentieth century. Be sure to tell your students that the scene was painted by American artist Willard Leroy Metcalf in 1917 and is entitled *October Morning—Deerfield* (*see inset for teacher's notes*).

3. Give each student a copy of Activity Page 2B and repeat the procedure described in Lesson Plan Step 2. (*Again, do not tell your students the title or subject of the painting yet.*) In the class discussion, students may conclude that the painting depicts a rural area in Japan sometime in the past. Be sure to tell your students that the painting, entitled *Country Scenes*, was painted by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai during the early decades of the 1800s (*see inset for teacher's notes*). Stress that the painting was done on panels that combine to make a six-fold screen, a form of traditional Japanese art your students will study in the next activity.

4. Review what students learned about both scenes by observing the paintings. How would they characterize the daily lives of the peoples depicted? How are the two scenes alike or different? Ask your students to consider whether paintings are good sources for clues to another culture. They will probably conclude that paintings are valuable sources of information. If they do not note any limitations of paintings as information sources, be sure to stress that paintings capture only a single moment in time, in a particular place, and may express only the viewpoint of the artist. Have students create a list of questions they have about the lives of the people depicted for which the paintings do not provide answers. What do the paintings tell us about life in Japan and America today? You may also wish to emphasize that we can misinterpret what we see. Conclude the activity by asking students what other sources of information they might examine for clues to a culture. Answers will vary, but students will probably conclude that paintings by other artists, artwork from different time periods, the accounts of travelers, and contact with people from another culture might provide alternative views of that culture.

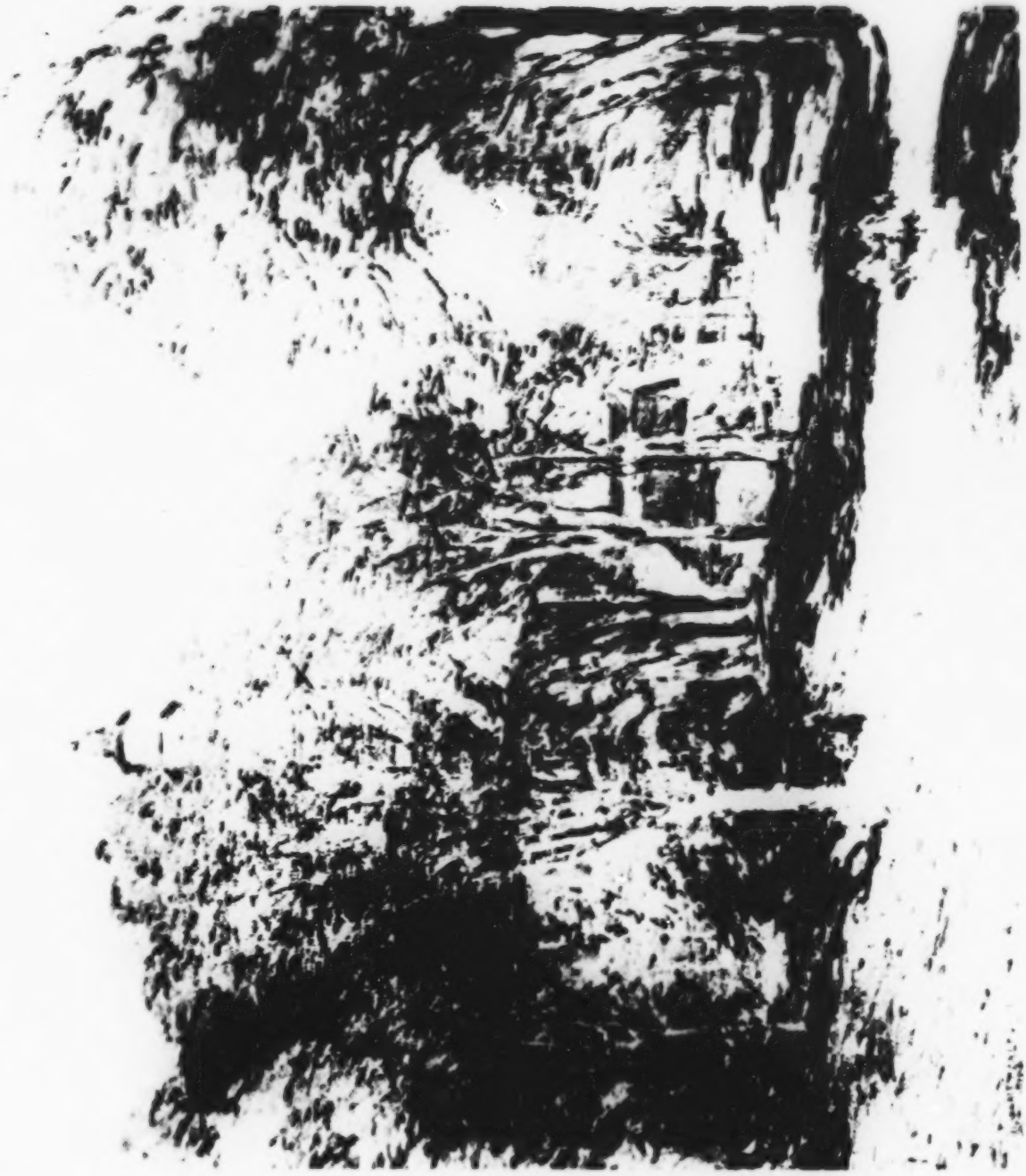
TEACHER'S NOTES

October Morning—Deerfield, Mass.
By Willard Leroy Metcalf (American, 1858–1925)
Painted in 1917
Oil on canvas
Freer Gallery of Art accession number 18.154
66.1 x 73.8 cm (26 x 29")

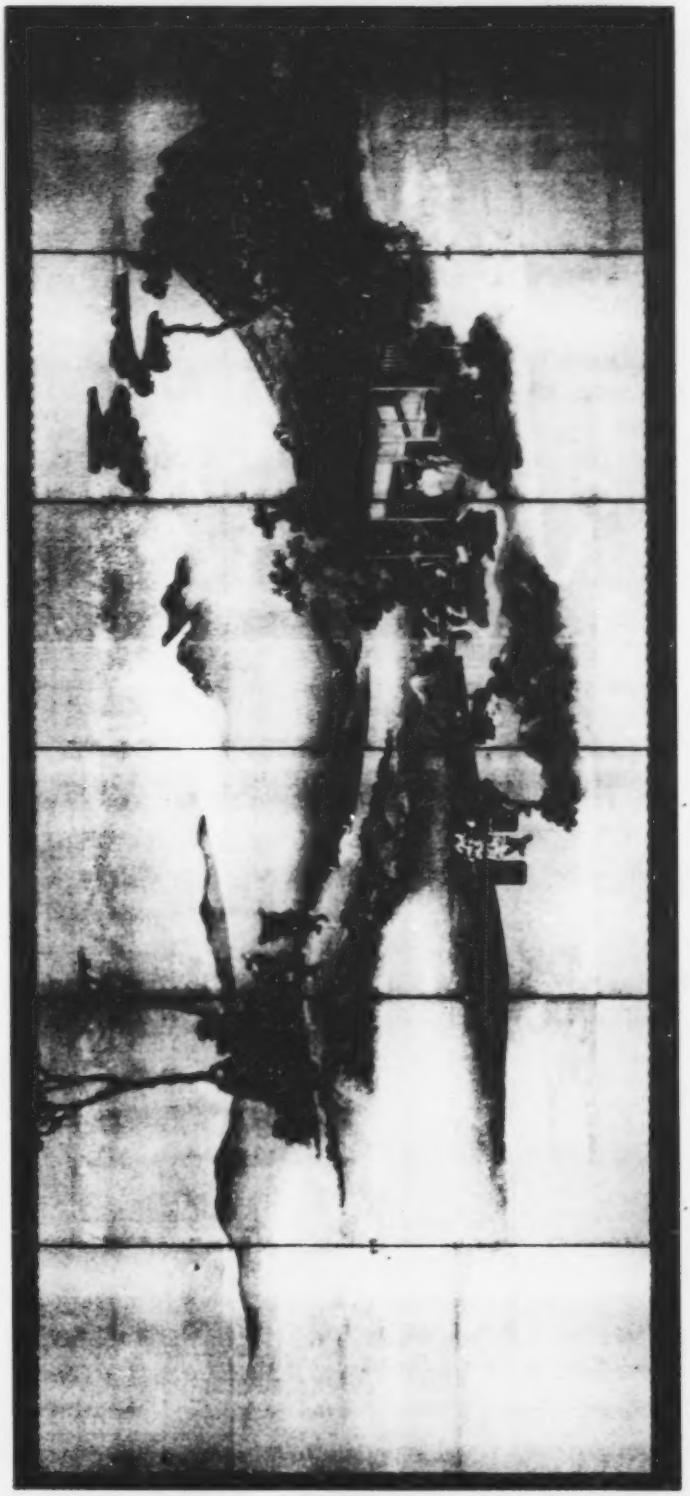
Country Scenes
Six-fold screen
By Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760–1849)
Ukiyo-e School, Edo period, nineteenth century
Color and gold on paper
Freer Gallery of Art accession number 02.48
150.9 x 353.1 cm (59 7/16 x 139")

This is a detail from the right screen of a pair of screens. The artist depicts the season, autumn, and the setting, Mount Fuji soaring above the clouds in the distant landscape. On the right side of the screen Hokusai painted a farmer's cottage. Four men are rethatching the roof; additional bundles of thatch are tacked around the trees. In the doorway of the house a man steps forward carrying a bundle of white cloth that he will bring to the two women who are seated on the ground. The women are fulling cloth, a method of processing woolen material with mallets to shrink and thicken it. Beside them stands a young boy, who drags a basket of chestnuts. Beyond this group a man works busily away deepening the grooves in a millstone, while two peddlers with their merchandise pause to chat on the path in the foreground. In the rear of the composition a white dog follows two men who converse on the bridge.

ACTIVITY PAGE 2A



ACTIVITY PAGE 2B



ACTIVITY PAGE 2C
Observing a Scene

Directions: Answer the following questions for each painting that you study.

What types of land and water forms (mountains, valleys, rivers, etc.) do you see?

Can you tell what season it is?

What types of buildings do you see? What materials do they appear to be made of?

What types of weather are these buildings best suited for?

Describe the clothing that the people are wearing. What type of weather is it best suited for?

Does this painting depict a scene in the United States or Japan? Why?

What are the people doing in the picture?

Is this a scene from the past or the present? Why?

BACKGROUND ESSAY 2

The screen is one of the most distinctive forms of Japanese art. Uniquely adaptable to a variety of settings, screens function both as free-standing partitions that define architectural space and as formats for the display of art. Many of Japan's greatest artists created paintings and calligraphy for folding screens known as *byobu*, which literally means *protection from wind*.

Folding screens ideally suit the flexible spatial environment of traditional Japanese architecture, in which most interior partitions consist of sliding panels (*fusuma*) rather than fixed walls. Compact when closed, folding screens can be conveniently moved and extended fully to provide a stately, formal setting for a ceremony or official meeting or arranged to encompass a more intimate space for serving tea, reading, writing, or sleeping. In traditional Japanese rooms, such activities take place on the floor, which is covered by *tatami* mats. The change of a few furnishings can transform the function of the room.

Types of Screens

Single-panel screens known in Japanese as *tsuitate* often stand near entrances to buildings, in corridors, and in small spaces. Folding screens (*byobu*), which range from two to ten panels, may be opened in various configurations to define smaller spaces within a room.

The most common format is the pair of six-panel screens, each screen measuring about one and one-half meters high and about three and one-half meters wide (approximately five feet high and about eleven and one-half feet wide). The design of a pair of screens may form a single composition when the screens stand side by side, but they usually have complementary themes, such as landscapes of the spring and autumn. When screens are intended for audience rooms or ceremonial display, the paintings usually depict auspicious subjects denoting dignity and power, such as pine trees or lions. Such screens are designed to be viewed from a distance. Low screens of two panels, each one-half meter (approximately one and two thirds feet) or more in height, are well suited to small tea gatherings or for embellishing a private living space. The intimacy of the space allows viewers to see art such as calligraphy, scattered fans, or a detailed painting at close range.

Construction of Japanese Screens

Like sliding *fusuma* panels, screens are made of a latticework of wood on which large sheets of paper are attached to from a taut, continuous surface. Painting and calligraphy for screens are usually executed on paper or occasionally on silk. Either material may be painted in subdued tones of ink or richly embellished with silver and gold. The whole screen is framed in wood, which may be lacquered and embellished with metal ornaments.

The nearly invisible system of paper hinges used to join the panels to form a folding screen was invented during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). This innovation enhanced the artistic potential of the Japanese screen by providing a visually continuous surface for large-scale paintings.

History of Screens in Japan

The first screens used in Japan, from the seventh to the eighth century, came from China and Korea. Later, screens were made in Japan.

Laborious and expensive to produce, screen paintings were often commissioned by patrons who expressed their artistic preferences through their choice of subjects and styles. Monochromatic ink painting, initially inspired by Chinese paintings, became an important style in Japanese screen painting beginning in the fourteenth century.

The large, continuous format of screens is especially suited to brilliant designs using color, often embellished with gold and silver. Gold leaf, which came into extensive use during the sixteenth century, covers the surface of some of the most magnificent screens. This translucent material softly reflects the muted light within traditional Japanese rooms, where the effect of the gold is more subtle than it appears in modern, artificial lighting.

The stability and prosperity of the Edo period (1615–1868) encouraged artistic innovation, stimulated by the emergence of new patrons from the merchant class.

Themes of Screen Painting

Landscapes of the four seasons or of spring and autumn have been popular themes in Japanese screen painting since the fourteenth century. Also common are narrative themes based on Chinese or Japanese literature. Calligraphy of Japanese or Chinese poetry appealed to the tastes of educated patrons. Tigers, dragons, popular deities, and even ghosts appear on screens. Beginning in the sixteenth century, screens depicted genre scenes of picnics and other activities in the cities and countryside.

An indispensable element of the daily environment of privileged Japanese households, Japanese screens, like many of the most highly esteemed Japanese arts, had both a practical and an aesthetic value. Among the most precious treasures of private and public art collections, screen paintings represent some of the most brilliant artistic achievements of Japan.

Adapted from an essay in A Closer Look: Japanese Screens *by Ann Yonemura, Freer Gallery of Art.*

LESSON PLAN
Step 3

JAPANESE SCREENS

Objectives

- Identify the uses of screens.
- Create a miniature folding screen inspired by Japanese examples.

Materials

- Copies of Take-Home Pages 1 and 2.
- Construction paper or plain stock paper.
- Photographs or slides of Japanese screens (*see Resources page for reference books*).
- Pens, pencils, or markers.

Subjects

Art, social studies

Procedure

1. Tell your students that they'll now be studying the unique art form of Japanese screens. Give each student a copy of Take-Home Page 1 and ask them to carefully study the photograph. (*You may also wish to display other screen images from reference books.*) Be sure to stress that the type of screen (*byobu*) reproduced on Take-Home Page 1 comprises a series of six folding, paper panels framed in wood and measuring about one and one-half meters (about five feet) high and three and one-half meters (about ten and one-half feet) wide. Ask your students to think how such large, lightweight, and highly decorative folding objects might have been used in a traditional Japanese home. Explain that a traditional Japanese home had only one or two stories, no basement, and relatively little floor space. Stress that this limited area often had to serve as a living room, dining room, and bedroom. (*If students need a further hint, ask them to think about how a school gymnasium or auditorium might be temporarily converted for use by a number of different classes.*) Answers may vary, but students will probably conclude that screens served as partitions between functional areas in a traditional Japanese home and could be moved easily to divide existing space in a variety of ways according to different circumstances.

2. Using the photograph on Take-Home Page 1 and additional images from reference books, direct your students to look carefully at the themes depicted in screen artwork. Ask them to describe generally what they see. Emphasize that screens often show seasonal landscapes and stories from literature, as well as tigers, dragons, deities, and even ghosts.

3. Give each student a copy of Take-Home Page 2. Tell your students that they'll now make their own miniature screen, inspired by the Japanese art form. Ask them to follow the directions on Take-Home Page 2 to create a miniature four-panel screen. Stress that they can decorate their screens in a number of different ways (e.g., a story could be told across the four panels, each panel could feature a different decorative design, or the panels could depict a composite landscape).

4. After students have completed Take-Home Page 2, ask them to explain their designs to the class. What did they depict in their screens? Where would they place their screen (e.g., in a dining area, living room, or bedroom) if it was as large as a traditional *byobu*?

TEACHER'S NOTES

Cherry Blossoms at Ueno Park
Six-fold screen
By Hishikawa Moronobu
(1618–94)
Ukiyo-e School, Edo period, seventeenth century
Color and gold powder on paper
Freer Gallery of Art accession number F06.267
180 x 382.2 cm (70 7/8 x 150 1/2")

This scene occurs in Edo, the site of modern Tokyo. The subject of the left screen is cherry blossom viewing and picnicking near the Kan'eiji Temple at Ueno. At the far right is the Kuro-mon, the black gate that until modern times stood in from of the site of the present-day Tokyo National Museum. The Shinobazu pond appears in the foreground, and an array of pilgrims, picnickers, and revelers—the townspeople of Edo—occupies the landscape. On the pair of screens the artist has painted some 394 residents of Edo, with almost no repeating of clothing patterns.

TAKE-HOME PAGE 1
What Is a Japanese Screen?

To the teacher
- Duplicate this page for students.
- Use with Lesson Plan Step 3.

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TRABAJO PARA HACER EN LA CASA 1
¿Qué es un biombo japonés?

Al maestro (a)
- Copie esta página para los alumnos.
- Usela con el tercer paso del plan de la lección.

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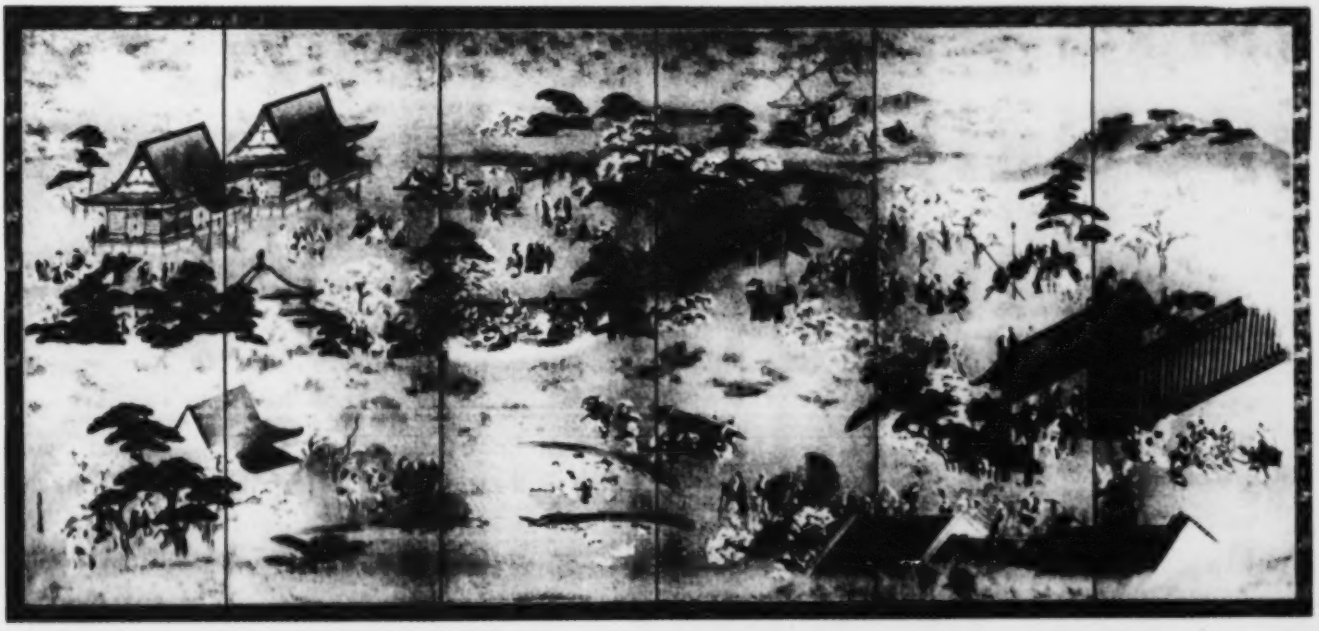

Japanese screens are sturdy, lightweight wood panels that are covered with paper and connected by nearly invisible hinges. There are single-panel screens, but usually you will find panels in pairs. You can find two or four panels together (but not three or five).

Biombos japoneses son paneles de madera, firmes pero livianos, cubiertos de papel y unidos con bisagras casi invisibles.

Hay biombos de un sólo panel, pero usualmente, los biombos estan hechos de pares de paneles. Hay biombos de dos o cuatro paneles, pero nunca de tres o cinco paneles.

TAKE-HOME PAGE 2
How Is a Screen Decorated?

To the teacher
- Duplicate this page for students.
- Use with Lesson Plan Step 3.

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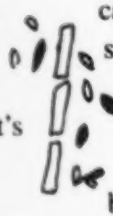
Pictures or words on a screen often have special meaning. For example,
Pine trees = Dignity
Bamboo = Purity
Lions = Power

You might also see some calligraphy. This beautiful writing may be the artist's name or a poem.



Ilustraciones y palabras en un biombo frecuentemente tienen un significado especial. Por ejemplo, árboles de pino significan dignidad; bambú significa pureza; y leones significan fuerza o poder.

En algunos biombos se puede ver caligrafía. Esta bella escritura puede ser un poema o el nombre del artista.

TRABAJO PARA HACER EN LA CASA 2
¿Cómo se decora un biombo?

Al maestro (a)
- Copie esta página para los alumnos.
- Usela con el tercer paso del plan de la lección.

Esta publicación ha sido posible gracias al generoso aporte de la Brother International Corporation.

The changing seasons are often depicted on screens. Look for images of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Silver and gold on a screen shimmer and reflect light in a dim room.

Frecuentemente se ve ilustrado el cambio de las estaciones. Busca imágenes de primavera, verano, otoño e invierno. Pinturas doradas y plateadas en un biombo brillan tenuemente y reflejan luz.

Make your own screen

Take a sheet of construction paper (or plain paper) and fold it in half once, then twice more. This process will give you an even number of screen panels. Decorate your screen with scenes from your favorite story, a decorative design, or a seasonal landscape.

Haz Tu Propio Biombo

Toma una hoja de papel, dóblala por la mitad y vuelve a doblarla dos veces más. Esto te dará un biombo con pares de paneles. Decora tu biombo con ecsenas de tu cuento favorito, con diseños decorativos o con un paisaje estacional.

RESOURCES

BOOKS AND TEACHING GUIDES

Baker, Joan Stanley. *Japanese Art*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

Doi, Tsugiyoshi. *Momoyama Decorative Painting*. Trans. Edna B. Crawford. New York: Weatherhill, 1977.

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SLIDES, PRINTS AND POSTERS

Slide, prints, and posters of many of the images in this issue can be obtained by writing to Museum Shop, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560. A $4.50 shipping and handling fee will be added to the cost of each order.

VIDEO RESOURCES

Faces of Japan, a five-program PBS series on contemporary Japan, is available for secondary schools. Write to Pacific Mountain Network, 12596 West Bayaud, Suite 215, Lakewood, CO 80228. $125.00.

Video Visits: Japan: The Island Empire stresses the connections and contrasts between traditional and modern Japan. Available from Library Video Company, P.O. Box 1110, Department AR, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004; (800) 843-3620. $24.95.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

A good starting point for teachers or others interested in exploring Asian resources on the Internet is the Asia Society World Wide Web site at **http://www.askasia/org**.

The Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art hosts an informative World Wide Web site at **http://www.si.edu/asia**.

Teachers can find a representative sampling of traditional Japanese art by visiting the Tokugawa Art Museum at **http://www.cjn.or.jp/tokugawa/index.html**.

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Sarah Ridley
Assistant Head of Education

Nancy Hague Lyons
Freer Teacher Associate, 1993–94

Marie Theriault
ImaginAsia coordinator

Ann Yonemura
Assistant Curator, Japanese Art

Waki Murayama
Schools Program Intern

PHOTOGRAPHS

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Content Developer
Alan Smigielski

Editor
Douglas Casey

Translator
Sarita Rodriguez

Designer
Karlic Design Associates, LLC
Baltimore, Maryland

Publications Director
Michelle Knovic Smith

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